

area of Alaska known as ANWR to drilling. They relied on the nonargument that it would take too long to get the oil to market. That was 10 years ago today. Every Democrat who was asked about it said the same thing, that it would take too long to get the oil to market. I have two pages of quotes from Democrats saying it would take at least 7 to 10 years to get the oil to market.

Well, here we are 10 years later. In some places gas prices are now three times what they were in April 2002. The United States still imports one-half of its oil. ANWR is still off-limits. If we ask Democrats why they oppose more domestic exploration, they will say the same thing they said 10 years ago.

This is precisely the kind of thing this President campaigned against 4 years ago. He was the one who was going to stop kicking the can down the road. He was the one who was going to tackle the problems everybody else was afraid to face. He was the one who was going to rise above petty squabbles and the tired talking points of the past and offer something different. He was going to be a different kind of politician who would usher in a new era of authenticity.

What did the American people get? They got the same gimmicks as before. They got someone whose idea of solving a problem is to give a speech about it or to blame whatever person, place, or thing doesn't happen to poll well that day. What the American people got was a President who absolutely refuses to lead.

It is the same thing they got from the Democrat-controlled Senate, the same tired talking points, the same evasion, the same refusal to address our problems at all.

Yesterday, the chairman of the Budget Committee made it official. For the third year in a row, Senate Democrats will refuse to do the basic work of governance by refusing to offer a budget blueprint for government spending—by the way, as required by the law.

After pledging both to me and his Republican counterpart on the committee that he would, in fact, mark up a budget this year, the chairman of the Budget Committee bowed, once again, to the political pressure and said he would not put his Democratic colleagues at any political risk by asking them to vote on a plan their constituents might not like; that is, not until after the election. The Democratic chairman did suggest, however, that if Europe implodes, he might change his mind.

Well, with all due respect, the statute doesn't say the majority must present a budget if the European economy implodes. It says it must present a budget, period, so that the American people can see how much they are going to be taxed and how their tax dollars are going to be spent.

I am having a hard time thinking of a word to describe the level of leadership we are getting from Democrats in Washington these days—whether it is

the President or the Democratic Senate. Frankly, it is a disgrace. There isn't a single issue I can think of that they are willing to do anything about.

Under this President's watch, Washington has been spending more than \$1 trillion a year more than it takes in. Senate Democrats don't even have the courage to put it all in black and white. They don't have any problem spending it; they just don't want to be on record voting for it. That is what passes for leadership in Washington these days.

Well, something has to give. Our challenges are too urgent. The status quo just would not cut it anymore.

#### NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I want to talk about the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This is the Federal agency that ensures the safety of our Nation's nuclear powerplants.

Specifically, I want to bring attention to the reappointment of Kristine Svinicki—or, rather, the curious lack of action surrounding her reappointment.

Commissioner Svinicki is one of the most respected Commissioners ever to serve at the NRC. She is an experienced and fair-minded regulator whose leadership has earned her the admiration of Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. She was confirmed for her first term without a single dissenting vote.

Prior to her 4 years on the Commission, Commissioner Svinicki spent more than two decades in public service working on nuclear safety issues in the Senate, at the Department of Energy, and with the Wisconsin Public Utilities Commission. A nuclear engineer, she is one of the world's foremost authorities on nuclear safety and nuclear power, and a great asset to the Commission.

Last year Commissioner Svinicki had the courage to stand up and blow the whistle on a sitting NRC Chairman, Gregory Jaczko, for bullying subordinates.

According to an Associated Press story from December:

The commissioners told Congress [that] women at the NRC felt particularly intimidated by Jaczko. Commissioner William Magwood—

Who is a Democrat, by the way—told the oversight panel that Jaczko had bullied and belittled at least three female staff members, one of whom told Magwood she was "humiliated" by what Magwood called a raging verbal assault.

This is the Democratic Commissioner on NRC, and here is an excerpt from the inspector general's report:

"Several current and former Commission staff members," it says, "said the Chairman's behavior caused an intimidating work environment. A former Chairman told OIG that the Chairman often yelled at people and [that] his tactics had a negative effect on people. He described the behavior as ruling by intimidation."

Commissioner Svinicki stood up to this guy, who somehow managed to avoid being fired in the wake of all of these revelations, in an effort to preserve the integrity of the agency and to protect the career staffers who were the subject of the Chairman's tactics. Now, for some mysterious reason, she is being held up for renomination.

The FBI completed its background check on Commissioner Svinicki 15 months ago. Her ethics agreement was approved around the same time. She has been ready to go for more than a year. There is no legitimate reason for Commissioner Svinicki not to have been renominated and reconfirmed by now. Any further delay is unacceptable.

If Commissioner Svinicki isn't renominated by June 30, NRC will lose one of its finest members, the Commission's work will be impaired, and we will be forced to conclude that the reason is related to her honorable actions as a whistleblower—that she is being held up in retaliation for speaking up against a rogue Chairman who bullies his subordinates.

There is a reason Congress charged five Commissioners with the responsibility to protect public health and safety. Ensuring the safety of our Nation's nuclear powerplants is serious business. So this morning I am calling on the White House to renominate Commissioner Svinicki today to ensure that this well-qualified and widely respected woman remains in place for another term.

The public is best served by a commission that is fully functional. There should be no question in anyone's mind that it will be fully functional. We cannot wait any longer for this nomination.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1925, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the first hour will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the second 30 minutes.

The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.